

Performance of Land Revenue Administration in Faisalabad (2001-2013): An Overview of Collection of Water Rate Abiana

Kiran Khurshid and Khalid Manzoor Butt

Abstract

Every government needs resources to run the country. In an agrarian economy like Pakistan collection of revenue from landed property becomes more significant. Land revenue generated from the landed property used to be the main source of revenue in the united Punjab during colonial era. That era witnessed unprecedented rise in revenue by means of digging up a network of an extensive canal system from rivers thereby rendering vast plains of Punjab cultivable. However, it is noted that this quite efficient and effective system of collection of land revenue has been underperforming. This paper tries to find and analyze the reasons of institutional deterioration and underperformance (of revenue department) through its focus on the revenue receipt and expenditure in Faisalabad.

Keywords: Land Revenue Landed Property, Revenue Administration, Politicization, Canal Colonies, Citizen Feedback Model, Political Will.

Introduction

The mainstay of the economy of Pakistan has traditionally been the agriculture. It is especially true in case of Punjab which has a natural gift of fertile plains combed with an extensive canal network mainly laid down in the colonial era. Potential of this land was further harnessed by developing canal colonies in West Punjab now in Pakistan. Landed gentry from the East Pakistan were lured to migrate to West Pakistan by leasing out huge tracts of land to them. Among the nine canal colonies established in this manner with slight diversions and modifications, Faisalabad, then Lyallpur, was situated in Chenab Colony.

Lyallpur grew as a market (*mundi*) town and then made a tehsil, subsequently a full-fledged district which was renamed Faisalabad in 1977 after the fond memory of late king Faisal of Kingdom Saudi Arabia. Though Faisalabad, a colony district, has now economically grown to be called the Manchester of Pakistan due to its industrial growth which is a result of agriculture produce there yet it has not reduced the importance of landed property and its accrual revenue to government. However, the machinery responsible for its collection has gradually lost its efficacy and there are leakages on every level in the

*Authors are Ph.D. Scholar and Chairperson of Department of Political Science, GC University, Lahore - Pakistan.

system. Moreover, politicization has further crippled the system and its efficiency.

Research Objectives

In this research study, the following research objectives have been framed:

- To decipher as to how and why a productive department turned into a non-productive one when it came to be managed by the indigenous elite.
- To study the revenue department through its focus on the revenue receipt and expenditure in Faisalabad, this insight may also be indicative of the plight of other public sector departments and resource generation organizations (WAPDA, Steel Mill Karachi, or Central Board of Revenue, for instance) in terms of setting unrealistic targets, political write-offs and rampant corruption.
- To analyze the reasons of institutional deterioration and rise of corruption.

Hypothesis

All else equal, for an organization to do well the cost incurred as maintenance charges must be proportionate to its income. In other words, if it is established that the cost incurred or investment is less than the profit margin then they said organization is doing well.

Research Methodology

It is an empirical study and a combination of different approaches of research like historical, descriptive and exploratory have been used to analyze the research problem. Statistical technique has also been adopted for data analysis.

Research Time frame

The period selected for research is 2001-2013. Reason for its selection is first availability accessibility and reliability of data regarding revenue collection and secondly the firsthand knowledge of the researcher during some of this time frame. The selection of this time frame also makes this research up to date by taking into account the latest information in the backdrop of evolving socio-political variables in play.

This time frame has been selected in lieu of the most recent changes in legal framework of local government institutions and its resultant structural impact

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on district administration. Moreover, it is the researcher's intention to evaluate the revenue collection in present era. Thus this paper comes up with some concrete and practical proposals for the better revenue collection and administration in the district.

Sources of Data

In order to conduct this study both primary and the secondary sources of data have been consulted. The primary sources are available in shape of historical documents in the Punjab Archives department and in other different administrative departments. Punjab District Gazetteers, Punjab Archives (Administrative reports, Election reports before partition: 1909, 1919, 1937, 1946), National Archives, Islamabad (Post partition administrative record), Record of Board of Revenue, Punjab, Archives of Government College University, Lahore which contains administrative reports of British India. Interviews with the local land lords, peasants and government functionaries have also been held in order to collect oral but vital and firsthand views of the major stakeholders. Information from various national and local newspapers as well as the original data from the revenue department has been gathered to depict the budget target and collection gap in the revenue collection in Faisalabad. The time frame fixed for the purpose is 2001 to 2013.

Data Collection Techniques

As described earlier, there was dearth of relevant literature. Therefore, the data was collected directly through observation, interviews, focused group discussions and original revenue recovery figures submitted by the department for its own consumption.

Data Analysis

This hypothesis is tested here through regressive analysis technique by means of analyzing actual data of previous ten years, 2001 to 2013, of land revenue collection in *tehsil*/Sadar, Faisalabad. In this instance, budget target of collection in a given fiscal year is used as independent variable and the actual recovery of revenue as the dependent variable. The researcher has tried to substantiate this hypothesis as well as practically validate this contention by applying her on-job experience and observations with the support of actual data as well as interviewed the major stakeholders.

Background

The nine canal colonies were established on the banks of five rivers of West Punjab by the British colonial regime. The idea was primarily to bring under cultivation the fertile but deserted tracts there. An excerpt from a report printed even before the annexation of Punjab indicates the motive behind expansion and revenue potential of Punjab.

Punjab might become a most valuable acquisition. It possesses great mineral wealth; its agricultural produce might be almost infinitely multiplied by a judicious system of irrigation, and transit trade on five rivers, if subjected to modern tools, would furnish revenue nearly equal to the ordinary expenses of the government. (*The illustrated London News*, 1846)

As early as in 1849, the government was weighing pros and cons of its nascent policy in Punjab. In this regard, a letter written by H.M. Elliot Esquire, secretary to Government of India to Lt. Colonel Sir H.M. Lawrence K.C.B., president to the Board of Administration for the Affairs of Punjab delineated the policy in following terms:

Colonists may be invited from distant provinces to break up the soil and settle upon the land, though it is to be feared that the love of home which prevails among our agricultural classes will preclude the possibility of much advantage being derived from this source. (Ashraf, 1995)

For that matter, an extensive system of canals was laid in West Punjab digging out of the rivers there. In order to bring about an agricultural revolution there, the people from best agricultural classes from East Punjab now in India were settled down in West Punjab by offering them attractive leases of squares and squares of land. One of the best irrigation system coupled with the generation of skilled and experienced agriculturalists heralded a new era in the economic transformation of a vast area in the history of subcontinent.

Imran Ali in his research endeavor 'The Punjab under Imperialism (1885-1947)' has beautifully encapsulated the colonization scheme in Punjab under British in the following manner.

The great agricultural colonization schemes undertaken in the western Punjab during British rule turned this area into virtual human laboratory, as castes, clans, and tribes from different parts of the province converged on the new lands....the Pakistani Punjab, where

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these 'canal colonies' are situated, still depends predominantly for its agrarian viability on the irrigations schemes initiated during the past century....the eastern parts of the old Punjab, now in India, provided large numbers of colonists to these tracts.(Imran, 1998, p.xiii)

There were the following nine canal colonies in all established on lands of Bari, Rechna, and Jech doabs are as under.

- The Sidhnai Canal Colony
- The Sohag-Para Canal Colony
- The Lower Chenab Canal Colony
- The Chunian Canal Colony
- The Lower Jhelum Canal Colony
- The Jhang Canal Colony
- The Lower Bari Doab Canal Colony
- The Upper Chenab Colony
- The Upper Jhelum Colony
- The Nili Bar Colony

The largest of these were the Chenab colony situated at the river Chenab wherein district Lyallpur was established. The officially stated objectives of the largest project, Chenab Colony, has been delineated in the Chenab Colony Gazetteer (1904) as such,

To relieve the pressure of population upon the land in those districts of the Province where the agricultural population has already reached or is fast approaching the limit which the land available to agriculture can support.

To colonize the area in question with the well to do yeoman of the best class of agriculturists, who will cultivate their own holdings with the aid of their families and usual menials, but as much as possible without the aid of tenants, and will constitute healthy agricultural communities of the best Punjab type. ("Gazetteer of the Chenab Colony: Lyallpur, Faisalabad," 1904, p.49)

To these objectives Imran Ali has added a third objective also that is to improve the quality of life of the villagers in these colonies by means of establishing model village sites and accordingly its allotment too(Imran, 1988, p.13).

Colonization scheme cannot be discussed in isolation of the irrigation plan actually the later preceded the former. The plan for construction of artificial irrigation system to water the parched tracts of *Rachna Doab* was in the pipeline since 1862. Various feasibility reports were prepared which could not get green signal because of inadequacy of estimates and uncertainty of financial return. It was in 1882, that the government selected the Lower Chenab Canal Project. This canal was originally designed as an inundation canal for the irrigation of the portions of the Jhang and Gunjranwala Districts. The head was situated at Garh Golah on the left bank of Chenab, and it was anticipated that it would command 881 square miles, of which 164 square miles would be Crown waste available for colonists.

The revised project of 1891 was estimated to cost Rs.2,65,15,966 out of which sum Rs. 2, 56, 84, 175 were shown as direct and Rs. 8, 31, 791 as indirect charges. It was anticipated that the canal would actually irrigate 528, 500 acres in 1899-1900, 993,000 in 1909-10, and that it would reach a full development of 1,100,000 acres in 1914-15, with its head-works at *Khanki*, a village in Gujranwala district, 8 miles below Wazirabad ("Gazetteer of the Chenab Colony: Lyallpur, Faisalabad," 1904, p.26). The project got the sanction of Secretary of State in July 1892.

The Gazetteer of 1904 noted that the subsequent extensions of the initial project expected to bring 6,013 sq miles under irrigation and that of colony to 4,431 sq. miles. Consequently revenue increased too. The main line of canal had a bed-width of 250 feet, and had run with a depth of about 11 feet and a discharge of 11,000 cubic feet per second.

Beyond the tail of the Rakh branch near Pacca Anna, the irrigation boundaries of the Jhang and Gugera system meet. The total length of these main channels is 426 miles. From these branches the distributaries and water channels have been designed to carry water to the land. In 1902-03, the total length of distributaries was 2,254 miles. There were 43 miles of escape channels and the water courses of a total length of 11,000 miles which took off from the distributaries. The total capital cost of the project up to end of 1903-04 was Rs. 280 lakhs with a profit margin of 24% on the capital invested. The revenue was expected to multiply manifold in the coming years as the concluding lines in Imperial Gazetteer of Punjab, describe;

The canal has thus not only enormously relieved the pressure of population in the congested districts of Punjab, but has proved a most remunerative investment, besides adding largely to the wealth of the country. (Rose, 2013, p.210)

Colonization of Chenab Colony

The Chenab colony comprised at that time of Faisalabad, KhanqahDogran, and a part of district Jhang, Chiniot and Gujranwala. "The land of Chenab Colony was for the most part Government waste, and was thus adapted for colonization on a scale hitherto untried in the history of India, if not of the World" (Rose, 2013, p.209).

As early as in 1887, the allotment had been started under the Occupancy Tenants or *Dakhilkari* Scheme. Every family was allotted one Sq of land under this scheme. Property rights were to be granted later on subject to fulfillment of certain conditions. The terms and conditions were revised afterwards. For the purpose of distributing the land and of settling the colonists in villages, a special Colonization Officer was appointed with headquarters at Lyallpur (in 1907, the D.C. was given these powers). In year 1903-04, there were about 1,423 villages, the average size being about 50 sq. or 1,400 acres. The work of Colonization began in earnest in 1892 under E. D. Maclagan, D.S., the then Colonization Officer.

Selection of Colonists

On the first stage, the grantees were divided into three categories.

Distribution of land in Chenab Colony

Type	Area Allotted	Criterion
Capitalists	6-20 sq. of land	Selected by Financial Commissioners
Yeomen	4-5 sq. of land	Hindu & Muslim Jats-Rajputs
Peasants	½ to 3sq of land	Jat, Kamboh, Sainis, Arains from E. Punjab

Table 1.1 Source: The Gazetteer of Chenab Colony

In subsequent allotments, other means of disposal of land were also adopted e.g. By the same token, the camel serving grantees who were predominantly *Biloch* herdsmen on the bank of river Ravi, they were expected to provide camels to the government when the occasion presented itself.

The division was based on the different terms of allotment and the range of the land allotted. Absentee landlords were discouraged. Preference was accorded to leading agriculturalists families from Central Punjab. Moneyed classes were not encouraged. When the landlords started selling their land to moneyed class frequently, in order to curb this trend the Land Alienation Act was imposed in 1901.

Phase 1 (1892): Allotment on Rakh & Mian Ali Branches

Almost 40,000 acres were reserved for allotment to capitalists, 60,000 to yeomen grantees and 27,000 to peasants. 10,000 acres were meant to be sold for auction and 20,000 acres were reserved for forests.

The old cattle breeding class of bar nomads were preferred for peasant allotments at this stage, firstly because they were good cultivators secondly to buy their cooperation for outside settlers. By the end of 1904, they had got 253,752 acres in peasant grants and 79,633 acres under camel service terms.

Village plan here was simplest of all. Actually no such plan was made at this stage which required measurement of all sites as well as records of rights; a flaw rectified subsequently. *Harrals*, one of the strongest among *Janglior* nomad tribes got grants on *Rakh* Branch. The allotments were also made to *Mazhabi*, pensioner grantees, and Auction land to Christian missions e.g. Roman Catholic Mission on *Rakh* Branch. The later also named their villages as such, e.g., Maryabad.

Phase 2 (1896): Allotment on Jhang&Bhowana Branches

The Railways were established in far as Lyallpur is concerned in 1896. The system of telegraph had been introduced and a network of water courses was underway. Against this backdrop, the upper part of *Jhang* Branch canal was opened for allotment. Considering the performance of Capitalist and Yeoman Grantees along *Rakh* Branch unsatisfactory, their share in this new allotment was reduced as against the Peasant grantees. This area was deemed a bit inferior in soil quality than the earlier allotments. Quite a number of grants were exchanged too. The process of allotment along *Jhang* Branch was completed by 1898.

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Breakup of Auction sales in Chenab Colony	
Auction Sales	10,000 (acres)
Capitalists	35,000
Military Yeomen	14,000
Military peasants	56,000
Punjab Police	5,000
Burma Military Police	1,000
Nomad peasants	544,000
Total	700,000

Source: The Gazetteer of Chenab Colony

The *Jhang* Branch plan for peasant villages set a standard. 'The *Bharwana* clan of Sial caste received Yeoman's grants mostly on the *Bhowana* Branch in *Jhang* and *Chiniot*. Other *Sial* clans which got the land were *Maghiana*, *Bhojuana*, *Patuana*, *Rajbana*, *Lakhuana* and *Khanuana*, almost all *Sial* clan names end in *ana*'. *Qureshis*, *Mazhabi* and pensioner grantees also got the allotments. The manner in which these villages were named is also very interesting, for example, the chak 424 JB Montgomerywala was named after the then Settlement Commissioner.

Phase 3 (1898): Allotment on Gugera&Burala Branches

The allot-able land here was initially estimated to be around 700,000 acres. Break-up has been given above.

It took two years to complete the allotment process in this phase. The significance of this entire process was that it progressed with the supply of canal water, railways, telegraph and other means of communication. The possibility of canal extensions and further allotments was not ruled out. However, major work of this arduous undertaking (colonization) had been accomplished during these three phases. A Rubicon had been crossed.

The village plan at *Gugera* Branch was the best of previous sites. Among others, *Vattus*; not a prominent tribe at that time, were granted land here as nomads and *Hitharis*. *Biloch* nomads were given the camel service grants, and the missionary societies were also allotted land and entire villages were inhabited by Christian converts, for instance, chak 371 GB Batemanabad was named after a missionary.

Distribution of Colonists by Religion and Tribe

It appears from the colonization plan that in the first phase many things were not anticipated. The village sites were haphazard and the allotments were not organized on basis of castes. The estates on the *Rakh* and *Mian Ali* Branches are not homogenous by tribe or religion. Rather each caste and religion got their representation without a specific design. This fact has been admitted by the Colonization Officer himself in his report.

A defect soon remedied in subsequent phases. Though no hard and fast rules were ever followed in this regard yet it can be safely stated that 'center of the colony was occupied by Hindu *Jats*, the inner ring by Muhammadan *Jats*, *Arains*, *Gujjars* and *Rajputs*, and the outer ring by nomads of the Bar(*Janglis*), including Camel Service Grantees, and men from riverain villages called *Hitharis*. Villages had been named usually after their elders or patrons. The elder from the leading tribe was appointed as the headman. There could be two to three headmen in a village. Sometimes the *Zaildars* were also appointed from among the colonists. This division disturbed in 1947 when a large number of immigrants came and were awarded land in colony districts.

Square System

The square (Maraba) system was introduced here by the British regime as an attempt to organize the agriculture and assessment of crop. The huge tract of colony was divided into sq. by the revenue officers on the base line laid with a Theodolite by the Irrigation Department. On the *Rakh* and *Jhang* Branches there are several base lines, while on the *Bhowana* Branch, the number is excessive. While whole of the *Gugera* branch is on one base line only.

Theoretically each square is a rectangular figure with sides of 200 karams or 1,100 feet. The area of a square is approx. 27.78 acres. In practice, sq. may be sometime slightly larger or smaller.

Killabandi or the Square System

The square was the basic unit of allotment. After the square system was adopted, the allottees started drawing haphazard fields within the square for cultivation. Then, the Colonization Officer, Sir Popham Young, devised a system of *Killabandi*. 'Dividing each square into 25 small squares or *Killas* each 220 feet by 220 feet, the area being 1 *ghumao* 18 *marlas*'.

Due to the successful implementation of *Killabandi* the idea was adopted in other colony districts also i.e., Jhelum and Gujranwala. Non-implementation of *Killabandi* was liable to be punished under the rule 32 of The Canal and Drainage Act, 1873. Like squares, these were also not perfect. But they saved time, effort and resource to re-measure every piece of land and assessment of crop yield could easily be calculated.

Village Plan

Initially the village plan escaped the attention of pioneers of Chenab Colony project. Later on, recognizing its significance in planned development a checklist was devised keeping in view the fundamental requirements. Gradual improvement can be observed in site plans from phase 1 to phase 3 of colonization. In each village an area of one square had been allotted in the center of the estate for the village site. Another square of same dimensions was also reserved in most cases for future growth.

Two printed site plans used to be issued containing the names and indicating the area allotted. One copy was kept at office whereas the other was given to *patwari* for implementation. It was obligatory for grantee except when otherwise provided, to build a house in the estate in which he was granted land. The grantees also brought their accommodation habits and styles of construction with them. They built their dwellings in their native style. This also has been summed up in the Gazetteer of 1904 as distinct dwelling habits of the *Ludhiana* Grantees, *Jullundhar* Grantees, and *Amritsar* Grantees. The villages were named officially after the appointment of *Lambardar* or village headman. Despite that the villages were denominated by their numbers for sake of administrative convenience. There are three distinct sets of serial numbers.

Rakh and Mian Ali	1-209
Jhang&Bhowana	1-504
Gugera&Burala	1-623

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Lyallpur was designed on pattern of union jack, the flag of British Empire. Eight radial bazars extended from the clock tower, laid in loving memories of Queen Victoria by the loyal Inhabitants of Chenab Colony, as the inscription on the bottom of clock tower reads.

After the inception of Pakistan, Lyallpur was renamed Faisalabad in 1977, it continued to remain an important business center. Other than being an agrarian economy, Faisalabad now boasts of being a city hosting major textile units in country. It is now called Manchester of Pakistan and is ranked the third biggest economic center in Pakistan after Karachi and Lahore.

At present, it comprises of six tehsils or administrative units responsible for revenue collection and general administration, namely,

- Faisalabad City
- Faisalabad Sadar
- Jaranwala
- Tandlianwala
- Samundri
- ChakJhumra

Each of these *tehsils* is headed by an Assistant Commissioner (AC) who work under the overall supervision of a District Collector (DC) or District Coordination Officer (DCO), the top most officer or public manager in the district (a district roughly equivalent to a city) being assisted by an Additional District Collector (ADC). They all are responsible for collection of land revenue for the provincial exchequer with team of their subordinate revenue functionaries in the district, all working under overall supervision and control of the Board of Revenue (BOR), Punjab.

Since its inception as a mundi town up till now, a lot of new variables have emerged in Faisalabad. Economic and political landscape has changed a great deal. With the growth of industry and opening up of new economic avenues, significance of land revenue collection declined. With the passage of time, lack of administrative supervision, corruption, leakages, neglect of government and deteriorating institutions and weakening mode of revenue collection have resulted in dwindling revenue collection in this profitable head of government income.

However, in order to study the malaise affecting the performance of the revenue administration, the focus of research has been made on the era beginning in 2001 up till 2013. The original data of this period pertaining to the selected indicators has been collected from revenue department which has

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been duly verified by the district treasury. The year 2001 has been selected as a starting point because in this year, the entire system of the local government was revamped by introducing the Punjab Local Government Ordinance (PLGO), -2001 which changed the political landscape and the system of local laws. These changes directly affected the performance of land revenue administration. That's why it is important to learn the working of the revenue department in present context and year 2001 has been marked as a starting point for sake of this research. Furthermore, the observations and experiences of the researcher are also related to this time period (Mar, 2008 to Oct, 2010). It transpires after going through the relevant manuals and statutes that the District Collector was the head of district administration and was deemed to be the most reliable person in the district by dint of his office. It has been highlighted by Thomson in his 'Directions for Collector' edition of 1850, paragraph 27.

Nothing can pass in the district of which it is not the duty of Collector to keep himself informed and to watch the operation. The vicissitudes of trade, the administration of civil justice, the progress of public work, must all affect materially the interests of the classes of whom he is the constituted guardian. Officious interference in matters beyond his immediate control must be avoided, but temperate and intelligent remonstrance against anything which he sees to be wrong is one of his most important duties. (Douie's & M. Gorrie's, p.138)

This unequivocal supremacy was the need of the hour during the early period of British colonial administration of Punjab which was challenged subsequently by the native intelligentsia in post-World War I scenario in the wake of nationalist sentiments among indigenous population. Since then, the office of the DC started shedding many of its powers. The process which was spurred in previous decades reached a climax in 2001 under the Musharraf regime. Under the objective of decentralization, a set of new offices was created under the District Collector who was now renamed the DCO. The real structure of district government which emerged now as devolution of powers scheme was a complex one which did away with an effective system of checks and balances among key departments of district. Though, the DCO is still the head of the eleven devolved departments but he was placed under the control of *Nazim*, an elected public representative in the district. Since 2008, the elections of local bodies have not been held in Punjab entrusting the role of the district Administrator to the DCO/DC through an executive order. Indeed, it is another anomaly of present system, where the powers again have been centralized in one office. But it is ironic to note for the chagrin of public that this stop gap arrangement since 2008 leaves much to desire for

coordination among DC, DPO and D&SJ, the three heads of their respective departments in the district.

Functions of the Land Revenue Administration

a. Revenue Specific Functions

- Assessment and collection of land revenue, cesses, rents and fees as levied under different statutes to be recovered by the provincial revenue department to be deposited in the government exchequer. It include, Water Rate, Local Rate, Agriculture Income Tax, Mutation Fees, Stamp Duty, Registration Fee, Rent of Government Lands and many other miscellaneous government dues such as court fee or fines etc.
- Adjudication of disputes arising out of land and which fall under the purview of the West Pakistan Land Revenue Act, Colonization Act and Tenancy Act which have been supplemented by various rules and manuals. Dispensation of justice in the revenue courts is based on a system of hierarchical control of checks and balances. The general conduct of revenue courts is governed under the Code of Civil Procedures (CPC) and Code of Criminal Procedures (Cr.P.C.) as applicable in civil and criminal matters to be tried by independent judiciary.
- Acquisition of Land for public purposes under the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. For this purpose, a land acquisition collector (LAC), usually the AC concerned is appointed who selects and assesses the value of land to be acquired under the relevant Act in congruence with the requirements of the project or matter in hand.
- Maintenance of Record of Rights or periodical record carrying basic information about the type and ownership of land as to who is tilling the land whether owner himself or through tenant. It contains all relevant but minute information about every inch of the land in a revenue estate for purpose of assessment and collection of revenue.
- Where ever there is the state land, i.e., the land owned by any state department, the district collector is the custodian of that land under the Colonization Act and is liable for its protection and keeping it free from encroachment and illegal occupation.
- Harvest or crop inspection or *Girdawri* in common parlance, twice in a year is also the responsibility of the revenue administration. Each *patwari* in his *patwarcircle* is responsible for inspecting all fields whether cultivated or not and also note in his crop inspection register the change of harvest and ownership if any on ground so as to keep his record updated. The field *kanungo*, *naib-tehsildar*, the *tehsildar*,

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AC, ADC, and the District Collector are also required to tour and examine record along with site inspections according to the instructions regarding checking of *Girdawari* or crop issued by the Board with reference to circular No. 60, dated 25.10.1982, issued by the Director of Land Records, Punjab.

- Consolidation operation and Settlement operations are to be carried out after regular intervals. The purpose is to reorganize the titles of land anew after approximately 30 years as in settlement operation. Both of these are huge and protracted exercises needed to be done minutely and thoroughly. At some revenue estates in Punjab, the settlement operation is in the pipeline. Veteran revenue *tehsildars* are appointed as the Settlement Officers or as the Consolidation Officers to carry out this onerous task.

b. Miscellaneous Functions

The scope of the revenue administration has been broadened under Section 19 of the Land Revenue Act stipulating that 'any other task which may be conferred upon them' that is the revenue officers. Therefore, the revenue hierarchy has been entrusted with many tasks of the nature of general administration described as under:

- To ensure price control of commodities of daily use or edibles like vegetables and fruits, by acting as price control magistrates under the Price Control Act, authorized to conduct the summary trial on spot and announce a fine up to 25000 or a punishment of two days in jail which is not appealable or a fine up to one lac or an announcement of sentence of up to three years in jail appealable in a civil court. The revenue officers, *naibtehsildar*, *tehsildar*, AC and ADC are entrusted the magisterial powers by the Home Department under this Act.
- Spearheading miscellaneous campaigns for selling of commodities of daily use at subsidized and controlled rates to avoid black marketing such as flour, sugar, wheat or fertilizers.
- Undertaking assignments or campaigns to curb illegal activities with the assistance of the police department, for instance, illegal sale and purchase of decanting of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), stoppage of kite flying under Kite Flying Act, checking and controlling illegal weighbridges in the area of its jurisdiction to protect poor farmers from exploitation of the nexus of the industrialists and commission agents and also check weights and measures in general markets with the assistance of the Labor department, to name a few special campaigns.
- Organizing bazaars and markets under Local Government Ordinance, 2001, for selling of cheap goods of daily use with the assistance of local

traders and retailers for general public especially in the month of *ramzan*.

- Special efforts to mobilize local philanthropists and well to do industrialists, farmers or civic community in an event of natural calamity, e.g., floods and earthquakes.
- This mere outline of the functions and tasks, some of these stipulated under the relevant Acts others not, are indicative of the huge scope of the revenue administration which also performs as the general administrative assignments.

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The West Pakistan Land Revenue Act, 1967 defines “Land Revenue assessed or assessable under this Act, or any other law for the time being in force relating to Land Revenue, and includes any rates imposed on account of increase in the value of land due to irrigation” (Butt, 2009, p.16).

Water Rate is the charge levied on the peasants, landlords and tenants equally by the government in exchange of the water provided for irrigation to their parcel of land for agricultural use. No government department is exempted from payment of Water Rate. For instance, the cultivated area under rightful occupation of the Pakistan Air Force, Ayub Agricultural Research Institute and the Agricultural University in Faisalabad which are institutions of national repute are assessed for payment of the land dues inclusive Water Rate, AIT and Local Rate.

Earlier the mode of assessment varied. But since 2003, the irrigation department has introduced a uniform rate of assessment of all lands in Punjab and the land lord or government tenant pays on basis of that flat rate according to the size of this land and flow of water from the water channel. It was decided in the Cabinet meeting of Punjab government held on 10th June, 2003 that,

- “Flat rate of *Abiana* at Rs. 85 per acre included in cultivable command for *Kharif* crop. Rs. 50 included in cultivable command for *Rabi* crop was approved. Further, rate of Rs. 250 per acre for sanctioned orchards was approved.
- The new system of flat rate of *Abiana* would come into effect from 1st of July, 2003.

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- The collection of *Abiana* will continue to be made through revenue administration.” (“Minutes of the Cabinet meeting, Govt. of Punjab,” 10th June, 2003)

However; it is no longer the case. Revenue department is no more responsible for collection of *Abiana* under prevalent instructions issued by the irrigation department which will be discussed later on in this chapter.

Water revenue has been historically a major area of recovery/collection. Irrigation department booked or assessed the demand of water rate, accounts of which were used to be sent to the office of DC to ensure its collection through the revenue field staff. The assessment of water rate has been a complicated affair traditionally. Wherever, the case was reported of breaking up of a water channel by a land owner to water move to his piece of land than his prescribed share, then the irrigation department authorities used to lay penalty on entire village on the damaged distributary or water channel whom they suspected of being the beneficiaries of broken water channel. This penalty or ‘*tawan*’ in vernacular language could be twenty times more than the actual rate of *Abiana* and process of its fixture was predominantly arbitrary. The affectees traditionally could file an appeal in the office of the divisional Commissioner. Since 2001 when the devolution of powers plan came into force under the PLGO, then the powers of the Commissioner were devolved upon the office of Executive District Officer Revenue (EDO-R) at the district level. But it also changed when the Punjab Irrigation and Drainage Act was adopted in all over Punjab in recent years. Now it is the office of the sub-Engineer of concerned circle in the irrigation department who is empowered to suspend, give total remission or reduce the amount of penalty. *Tawan* or fine was also to be recovered by revenue department. Sometimes accumulated fine or *tawan* exceeds the original demand of *Abiana*. The late payment charges were termed surcharge at the rate of 10 percent of the demand of *Abiana* levied on the land owner.

However, for the sake of this study only pure water rate inclusive of *tawan* or fine for breach of a canal or distributaries has been selected as the land revenue indications minus late payment charges. The target assigned by the BOR at the start of agricultural year includes the new demand or current assessment of the water rate to be collected as well as arrears of the previous years to be collected from defaulters.

In the data tabled regarding collection of water rate, the target is combined figures for current assessment of the corresponding years as well as the accumulated arrears of water rate, collective efforts are undertaken jointly by

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the revenue department for recovery of current as well as previous demand, and hence, these have been taken as 'combined' target.

Table 1.3: Collection of Water Rate (*Abiana*) from 2001-2013

Years		2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
	Target Given by Govt.	218410307	234222343	280529385	330577185	404726033	343305034
	Remission	4938164	2678025	5256391	18609664	9666025	3837085
	Collection	131164147	124551481	117517557	108580477	115894343	46726241
	Suspension	40393187	52749137	75306419	75378246	121115044	119394682
	Irrecoverable	7600191	6683396	10263564	22276971	28790063	41125351
	Net Recoverable	165474765	172111785	189703011	214312304	245154901	178947916
	Balance	34310618	47560304	72185454	105731827	129260558	132221675
	% against original Target	60.05	53.17	41.89	32.84	28.63	13.1
	% against Net Recoverable	79.26	72.36	61.95	50.66	47.27	26.11

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Grand Total	2012-13*	2011-12	2010-11	2009-10	2008-09*	2007-08	2006-07
3489131964	10582520	216734001	228999032	243528601	295038135	325823514	356655874
201519735	3899460	73825636	27948033	5892699	39471940	4258797	1237816
799606944	1969037	37882645	6388701	8636870	20120109	26526582	53648754
1264994184	57628036	58029966	97561927	110223386	103749476	191737870	161726808
664125043	42345987	46849754	97000396	118775646	121450590	67426690	53536444
1453749002	1969037	38028645	6488676	8636870	30366129	62400157	140154806
654142058	0	146000	99975	0	10246020	35873575	86506052
22.91	18.6	17.47	2.78	3.54	6.81	8.14	15.04
55	100	99.62	98.45	100	66.25	42.51	38.27

Source: Compiled by the researcher from the original data verified by the District Accounts Office

From the combined target/amount to be recovered, the remission is deducted. Remission each year is deducted when the over assessment of water rate is condoned by the Sub-Engineer (SE) irrigation or due to some other damage to crop or land. Remission amount is deducted from original collections. It comes to amount recoverable under column 4 as mentioned in Table 1.3. Suspension is the amount suspended from collections by orders of some court till the decision of the appeal or review filed by the land owner. As his plea is pending adjudication in the court of law, hence, temporary relief is granted to him by awarding the stay order or issuing the order to maintain status quo, thereby halting its recovery.

The irony is that due to overburdening of the legal system, corruption at the lower level of court staff, disinterest of the revenue field staff, lack of supervision and having overburdened with the administrative assignments. Such injunctions and stay orders continue to persist for years. There have been reported incidents, when the revenue officers 'advised' the land owners to obtain some status quo order from a court of law. It served them mutually as the pressure for collection was shifted from the land owner and the collection target of the revenue officers was reduced because of amount being under suspensions.

Irrecoverable as mentioned in column 6 of the Table 1.3 is the amount under litigation which has been assessed as *tawan* or fine for breach in the distributor or a canal imposed on all beneficiaries. Ratio of this fine may be twenty times the original amount of water rate. When the aggrieved landowners file appeal in the competent forum and the amount of fine is reduced say from twenty times to ten times as per discretion of the authority, then there arises a need for recalculation of the fine against each landowner. But what generally happens is that no timely calculation is done by the irrigation department which renders the collection from the landowners involved difficult. As the appeal has already been decided with some relief to the peasants, so the revenue department cannot ask for its payment, hence, this amount is reflected as irrecoverable which is due to the sheer negligence of the irrigation department to make revised accounts. And this amount lingers on, unless some special effort is made to implement the decision of the court and make revised accounts of imposition of fine.

Remission, suspension and irrecoverable amounts are deducted from original target as well as previous collection that give us net recoverable amount as in column 7 of Table 1.3. (Col .3+4+6+4-Col. 2= Col.7).

The graphical depiction or the recovery or collection has been projected below. The chart 1.1 projects the percentage of original target of water rate as

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assigned by the government or in this case BOR for district Faisalabad from fiscal year 2001-2013. The figures have been obtained by applying following formula;

$$\frac{\text{Collection}}{\text{Original target given by the Government}} * 100 = \% \text{ against original target}$$

Or

$$\frac{\text{Col. 4}}{\text{Col. 2}} * 100 = \text{Col. 9}$$

Whereas the chart 1.2 projects the % of collection of net recoverable by applying following method;

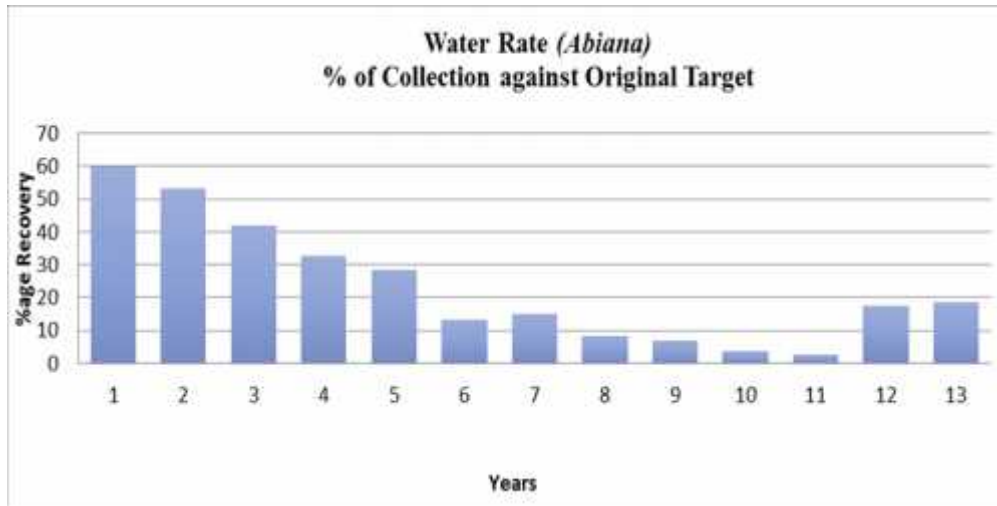
$$\frac{\text{Collection}}{\text{Net Recoverable}} * 100 = \% \text{ against Net Recoverable}$$

Or

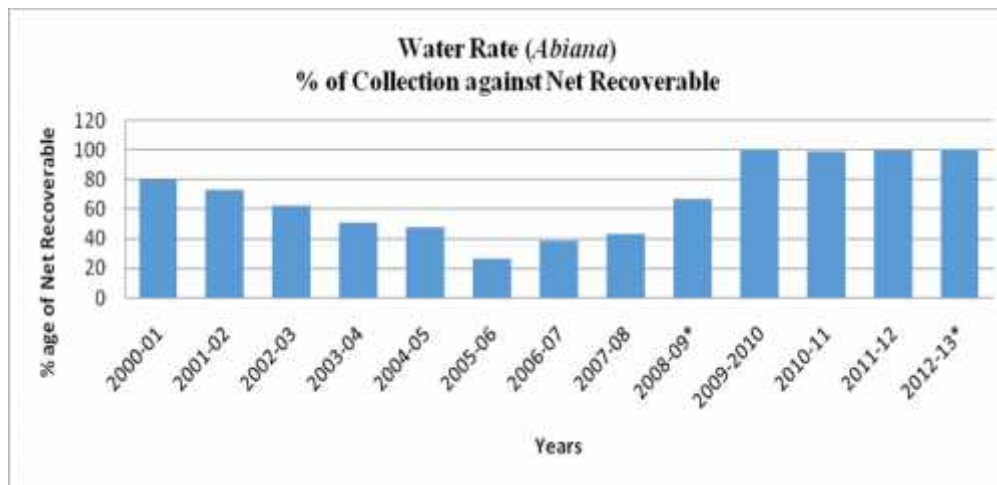
$$\frac{\text{Col. 4}}{\text{Col. 2}} * 100 = \text{Col. 9}$$

A comparative analysis of both these charts highlighted the marked difference in the resultant percentage or the eventual performance of revenue department. In both presentations, there is huge difference of the end result that is annual percentage of recovered amount against its original target.

As the performance of revenue department is evaluated as against the projected percentage against net recoverable, hence, the earlier columns especially Suspensions is ignored that suspends the collection of millions and billions of rupees thereby reducing much the original target. Pressure on the revenue officer also recedes in this way. They have to collect fewer amount from land owners, therefore less effort is required.

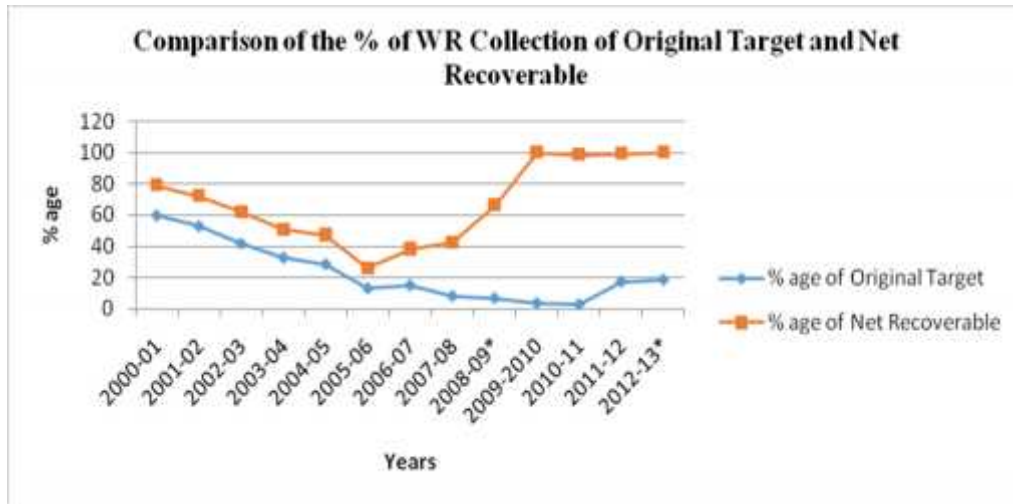


Graph 1.1: Source: Compiled by the researcher from the original data verified by the District Accounts Office



Graph 1.2 Source: Compiled by the researcher from the original data verified by the District Accounts Office

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Graph 1.3: Source: Compiled by the researcher from the original data verified by the District Accounts Office

Since 2001 when the PLGO was adopted, it transformed the system of local government as well as affected the working of the revenue department by doing away with the enforcement mechanism such as district magistracy as well as overhauling the job descriptions and nomenclature of the district administration for sake of devolution and decentralization of powers.

Consequent upon such developments, the irrigation department also undertook reforms to introduce participatory irrigation management. The efforts were already underway since 1997 when the Punjab Provincial Assembly adopted the Punjab Irrigation and Drainage Act which set up a Punjab Irrigation and Drainage Authority (PIDA). This package of institutional reforms was viewed as an attempt to empower the peasants and farmers at grass roots level to ensure effective water management through community participation and ownership. Under this reform package three entities were established in a hierarchical manner.

- Punjab Irrigation and Drainage Authority (PIDA) was devised at provincial level comprising of the representatives of farmers and the members from the public sector.
- Area Water Board (AWB) at canal command level
- Farmers Organizations (FOs) at the level of distributary

Under PIDA a pilot project was initiated in the Lower Chenab Canal (LCC) Area (East) comprising of four canal divisions, Khanki, Upper Gogera, Lower Gogera and Burala. This project set up an Area Water Board of LCC notified

in 2000. Under this AWB, the first Farmers' Organizations (FOs) were established in 2005 comprising of the representatives of local farmers. This delay was for want of devising of relevant rules. Mohammad ArifRaza, et al, has described the rationale of behind making FOs:

Farmers' organizations are basic management units responsible to operate and manage irrigation and drainage infrastructure within its jurisdiction. The process of institutional reforms commences with community development at village level so as to aware farming community of Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) initiatives and to organize them for establishment of FOs."(Raza, Ashfaq,&Baig, 2009, p.4)

The objectives behind these reforms were to enhance community participation and awareness about dealing the issues of water theft, breach of water courses and their timely repair and maintenance, collection of Water Rate and conflict resolution arising out of share of canal water by the farmers themselves through their own locally elected FOs. It was believed that devolution of responsibility at the local level and empowerment of the peasant would lead to the improvement in the irrigation system and collection of Water Rate. But, this measure has been proven counterproductive. The interviews with the peasants, land owners and with some of the presidents of the respective FOs have established that the performance of majority of such FOs is far below the mark. The main reason is that they don't have the enforcement mechanism at their disposal to ensure 100% and timely collection of Water Rate from the defaulters. They also lack supervision and support of the officers of the irrigation department in their district so their issues linger on. Another important factor highlighted was the kinship or *biradri* (caste) politics. The presidents or members of FOs ignored breach of canal and water theft by their own kinsmen. The other *biradris* face a disadvantage. Police doesn't respond to them if they seek to get a case registered against the culprits. Resultantly water theft has become rife. It was also highlighted in some cases that the respective members of FOs either hesitated in collecting the Water Rate from door to door on the one hand and on the other hand, some who were successful in such collection usurped all funds and no amount was deposited in the government treasury. But they got Scots free as no action was taken by the department to investigate the matter or to redress the situation. Result is not only the loss to the government but also the erosion of the credibility of the FOs on the whole.

Few peasants praised the working of their respective FO rather majority demanded that the previous system of Water Rate collection was better and more effective. That was a responsible as well as a responsive system. Now

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the FOs are unable to tackle their canal water issues and have been rendered ineffective due to lack of supervision and control of the irrigation department. The collection of even current demand of Water Rate has suffered what to speak of collection of arrears, fine or surcharge on its breach. Asrar-ul-Haq has explained this dilemma in following manner. He has undertaken a case study of 82 FOs in the pilot project of LCC to unravel the performance of these grass roots but nascent organizations. He has come up with almost the same concerns as shared by the stakeholders with the researcher in interview.

The overall evaluation indicates that performance of about 20% FOs is good, about 60 – 65% FOs are performing satisfactorily, while the performance of 15 – 20% FOs is unsatisfactory to poor. The performance evaluation brings out specifically good results with regard to the dispute resolution, improved equity and development of local capacity for irrigation management. The main concerns highlighted by the study include: significant declining trend in *abiana* collection, weaknesses of FOs in maintenance of accounts and records, increasing water theft, and elite capture in some cases. One of the major issues flagged by the evaluation relates to difficulty of FOs in dealing with water stealers and the *abiana* defaulters. This is attributed partly to the peculiar sociopolitical setting and partly to the lack of recognition of the FOs in the local administrative set-up. Another issue that has been brought out is the need for rehabilitation of FO managed channels. The problem faced by FOs is that the dilapidated channels seriously constrain their ability to efficiently operate the system. The challenge therefore is that of optimizing the timing of system modernization and the management transfer. (Haq, 2010, p.23-300)

Therefore, Haq (2010) recommended the 'imperative need for, "capacity building and mainstreaming of FOs, avoiding institutional fatigue, closer coordination and support by AWB / PIDA, and improved monitoring systems for identification of problems and timely course correction"

Situational Analysis

Due to these reasons mentioned above there have been witnessed a significant deterioration in collection of Water Rate. The structural deterioration, absence of a supervisory mechanism over FOs, lack of enforcement mechanism at their disposal as well as socio political factors have exhilarated this trend.

On top of these factors is the financial jugglery of misrepresentation of the accounts and figures. This declining trend can be witnessed in the Table 1.1

as well as in its graphical presentation. This downward trend is not only visible in the collection of Water Rate but also in the setting of demand or targets over the years. In district Faisalabad, the canals were given under the control of PIDA and AWB in a gradual manner starting from 2005, this process completed in 2009 when all canals were given under the direct control of AWB under PIDA and the FOs were constituted on each distributary for collection of Water Rate and maintenance of canals. The revenue department was entrusted with the responsibility of collecting the arrears or fines accruing from previous judgments of the courts in the issues allied to water theft.

Therefore, demand for current year is now booked and assessed by the respective FO which is responsible in depositing this amount in the account of FO. These figures are not shared formally to the revenue department at any level. Therefore, the declining trend of the collection can be witnessed in table 1.1 from year 2005-06 onwards. Where even a glance at the percentages depicted in the column 9 indicates that there has been significant decline in collection of water rate in Faisalabad. The reasons are twofold. First because since 2005-06, the canals in Faisalabad were being started handed over to the AWB for sake of water rate collection and secondly the shirking of responsibility among the revenue officers for its collection because of the constitution of FOs. This declining trend appears far wards if they take into account the fact that it does not include the current demand of local rate since 2009 onwards. That amount goes largely unaccounted for and the leakages and corruption by the FOs is yet to be evaluated as it is beyond the scope of this research study. The revenue officers when interviewed also mentioned individually that the amount of arrears is far more difficult to recover because the defaulters are more inclined to pay the current demand and when they know that the current demand is to be collected by the FO concerned, and then they are least interested in paying their past liabilities.

A comparative analysis of percentage of collection against original target and against net recoverable is a classical case study of financial jugglery. There appears to be a huge gap between the two which has widened tremendously in the recent years. Because the huge amounts are covered under the suspension and irrecoverable which are deducted from the original demand/target but not permanently. It does not absolve the defaulter of his liability but only gives him space to avoid its payment in near future. But what actually happens is that the officials responsible for this collection avoid pursuing the court litigations to mitigate the amount of suspension and revision of accounts thereby reducing the irrecoverable amount. The huge amounts under suspensions and irrecoverable not only reduces the stress for collection of water rate on the revenue officer/FOs but also upon the defaulters. Consequently, the amount net recoverable is significantly reduced

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as against the original target. When the percentage of collection is calculated against the net recoverable then the result is far optimistic than when it is calculated against the original target.

Even a cursory glance at column 2 of Table 1.1 is sufficient to bring to the notice that there has been a gradual decline in the assessment of demand of water rate over the years, largely, because since 2009, no current demand is being assigned for recovery to the revenue department. On the other hand, the collection of water rate by the FOs does not exactly present a rosy picture. This trend cause observed by the researcher while interviewing with the stake holders and in the FDGs. This concern has also been felt by the irrigation department and PIDA. The following correspondence of the Chief Engineer of the irrigation department is self-explanatory. Due to the inability of the FOs to recover the Water Rate, the Chief Executive, Area Water Board/ LCC (West) Circle, Faisalabad directed Executive Engineers under his command vide letter No. MOP/AWB/LCC (W)/2012/516, dated 02012013 that 'according to agreement rules 12(5) the collection and recovery of water charges by the FOs for the current demand shall be done through respective *Lumberdars* or village headmen who shall deposit the collected amount in FO account after deducting collection charges'.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The in depth analysis of the water rate over a time period under research as a major source of land revenue indicate a declining trend in its collection due to multiple reasons. This may include the structural weakness, lack of enforcement mechanism, manipulation of facts and figures, and incapacity of FOs to collect the same. It is suggested that FOs be held accountable to some government department either the irrigation or the revenue for sake of assessment and collection of water rate. The concept of the ownership of community is ideal but it cannot be successful ignoring the ground realities of local culture where caste, politics and kinship is rife. The merit and justice are often sacrificed on the altar of blood relation and caste. This especially is true in the socio-political backdrop of Punjab. The majority of population here is illiterate and poor; therefore, when human resource is empowered it resorts to multiple excesses. It goes without saying that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

In view of the incapacity of FOs, lack of supervision and in absence of enforcement mechanism, the FOs cannot realistically be expected to perform up to the mark. It will always result in resorting to seek help from the revenue department as it has the field staff and legal recourse available for collection of demand at its disposal. Unless a concrete approach is adopted keeping in view the ground realities as well as the available resources at its command, no reform efforts can work in isolation.

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